

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

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FROM NAAS FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: MASS, IR

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON STAR ARTICLE

TEXT OF LEAD FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN SEPTEMBER 15 WASHINGTON STAR GIVEN BELOW. HEADLINES WERE: "PENTAGON PROBES FORCES IN IRAN," "RECORDS OF MILITARY ADVISORY UNIT DESTROYED, APPARENTLY TO THWART INVESTIGATION."

"THE FINANCIAL RECORDS OF THE TROUBLED U.S. MILITARY MISSION IN TEHRAN HAVE BEEN DESTROYED IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO THWART A PROBE BY SERVICE INVESTIGATORS, ACCORDING TO WELL-PLACED SOURCES.

THE RECORDS HAD BEEN TAKEN OVER BY THE AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS, WHICH OFTEN CONDUCTS INVESTIGATIONS FOR THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT. BUT THE CHIEF OF THE MISSION, AIR FORCE MAJ. GEN. KENNETH P. MILES, ORDERED THE RECORDS

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RETURNED TO THE OFFICER WHO HAD HAD CUSTODY OF THEM, AC-

CORDING TO THESE SOURCES.

THE OSI HANDED THEM OVER AND THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DESTROYED ACCORDING TO SEPARATE ACCOUNTS OF THE EPISODE, WHICH OCCURRED LAST MONTH.

THE DESTRUCTION CAUSED REVERBERATIONS THAT REACHED THE PENTAGON, WHERE THE EPISODE CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD H. RUMSFELD.

A NEW INVESTIGATION INTO THE ENTIRE MATTER HAS BEEN ORDERED, AND ONE SOURCE SAYS A REPORT IS EXPECTED "PRETTY DAMN QUICK."

THE RECORDS IN QUESTION ARE THE BOOKKEEPING--EXPENSE ACCOUNTS AND THE LIKE--FOR THE U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP IN IRAN, WHICH IS THE LARGEST SUCH GROUP IN ANY NATION OVERSEAS. THEY DO NOT INVOLVE THE BOOKKEEPING ON THE 10 BILLION DOLLARS IN U.S. ARMS SALES TO IRAN.

THE RECORDS IN QUESTION ARE SAID TO INVOLVE FUNDS AT LEAST "IN THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS", ACCORDING TO ONE ACCOUNT OF THE EPISODE. IT WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY CLEAR WHAT PROMPTED THE INVESTIGATION OF THE MAAG'S BOOKS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THE MAAG, AS SUCH GROUPS ARE INVARIABLY CALLED, EMPLOYS 191 MILITARY PERSONNEL, 18 U.S. CIVILIAN PERSONNEL AND 39 LOCAL PERSONS. THE HISTORY OF THE MAAG IN TEHRAN HAS BEEN ONE OF CONTROVERSY THAT HAS BEDEVILED THE STEADILY INCREASING RESPONSIBILITY INHERENT IN THE LARGE U.S. ARMS DEALINGS.

THE RECORDS IN QUESTION ARE THOUGHT MAINLY TO DEAL WITH THE TENURE OF MILES AS MAAG CHIEF. HIS PREDECESSOR, MAJ. GEN. HOYT S. VANDENBERG, JR., WAS ABRUPTLY YANKED FROM THE JOB IN JANUARY AFTER ONLY FIVE MONTHS IN TEHRAN.

OFFICIALLY, THE PENTAGON SAID VANDENBERG WAS REMOVED FROM TEHRAN AFTER IT WAS DETERMINED THAT HE LACKED THE PROGRAM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MANAGEMENT AND WEAPONS MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT SUDDENLY DECIDED IT NEEDED IN GREATER QUANTITIES IN IRAN.

OTHER SOURCES, HOWEVER, SAID THAT VANDENBERG WAS YANKED BEFORE HIS OBVIOUS DISLIKE FOR THE IRANIANS COULD CAUSE TROUBLE. OTHERS SUGGESTED THAT IT HAD ALREADY CAUSED CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE.

ONE SOURCE SUGGESTED THAT ONE REASON NO SENIOR OFFICERS
HAVE BEEN MOVED OR SUSPENDED DURING THE CURRENT CONTROVERSY
IN THE MAAG IS THAT "THEY'VE HAD SO MUCH TURMOIL ALREADY."

THE MAGNITUDE OF ARMS SALES TO IRAN, THE OVERSIGHT OF THOSE
SALES BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE ABILITY OF THE IRANIANS
TO ABSORB AND OPERATE THE SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS THEY ARE
BUYING HAVE BECOME MATTERS OF GROWING CONCERN.

A RECENT STAFF REPORT OF THE SENATE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE SUB-
COMMITTEE SAID ARMS SALES TO TEHRAN WENT "OUT OF CONTROL"
IN 1972. THE REPORT QUESTIONED THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF
THE U.S. INVOLVEMENT. HOWEVER, THE PENTAGON OFFICIAL IN
CHARGE OF FOREIGN ARMS SALES YESTERDAY DENIED THAT CHARGE."
ROBINSON

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